(c) Rapid increase in the number of tubewells from 1.92 lakhs in 1970-71 to 8.95 lakhs in 1996-97 has resulted in over-exploitation of ground water in 70 out of 118 blocks of the State leading to decline in ground water level. The imbalance in the use of ground water can be ameliorated though proper distribution of available water resources in the State, appropriate crop planning and timely sowing of rice crop, ground water recharge projects in the *Kandi* region and other potential sites, harvesting of rain water in paddy fields and village tanks, efficient use of saline and poor quality water and rationalization of water and energy pricing.

Joining UPOV

1776. SHRIMATI GURCHARAN KAUR:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:
SHRI KAILASH JOSHI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 313, given in the Rajya Sabha on the 19th July, 2002 and state:

(a) whether Government's decision to join UPOV would nullify the Plant Varieties Protection and Farmers' Rights Act, passed by the Parliament recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction in this regard; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to protect the interests of farmers under the Act?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 protects farmers' rights to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell their farm produce including seed of a protected variety except to sell branded seed of a protected variety. Farmers are also entitled to claim compensation if the seed fails to provide the expected performance under given conditions.